

Middlesex County Office of Culture & Heritage
presents

Celebration of Greek Dance *with the* Hellenic Dancers of New Jersey

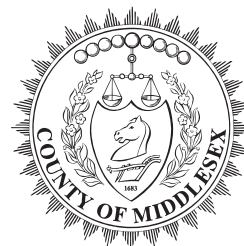
FRIDAY, JANUARY 29, 2016 • 7pm

Crossroads Theatre
7 Livingston Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ

*Crossroads Theatre facility was made available through the generosity
of Johnson & Johnson and the New Brunswick Cultural Center, Inc.*

Funded by

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The Folklife Program for New Jersey
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Hellenic Dancers of New Jersey



Inseparable from Greek life is an absolute heritage preserved by the Hellenes since antiquity. Carried in their souls, these national legacies manifest themselves in music, song and dance. "To dance is to live...to live is to dance." This quote from *Zorba the Greek* best exemplifies an inherent characteristic of the Hellenes. Dancing is an immediate expression of feeling and emotion; a joy of life that embraces centuries of history and Hellenism.

The Hellenic Dancers of New Jersey, founded in 1972, is a group of young men and women, who are first-, second- or third-generation Greek-Americans. They are dedicated to perpetuating their heritage through enthusiastic performances of the regional folk dances of Greece.

Under Eleni Chakalos, the late founder and director, over 300 dances, songs and traditions from mainland Greece, its islands and Asia Minor, have been preserved and passed on to three generations of Greek-Americans. Their traditional music and folk dance selections represent a cross-section of the diverse regional customs of Greece, past and present, performed in authentic ethnic dress. Meticulously researched and reproduced, their wardrobe represents the regions from which the dances originated, and include jewelry, hats, shoes and other accessories.

The Hellenic Dancers' desire to share their cultural identity and the pride that they feel for their Greek heritage is evident in the precision and enthusiasm that they bring to each performance. They continue their mission by sharing the richness of their Greek inheritance with younger dancers and the American public, and by assuring a sense of pride and cultural awareness with each generation.

This outstanding troupe is nationally recognized for its presentation of Greek traditions; appreciative audiences have at times exceeded 34,000 persons. Performances have been by special invitation only and include the following civic, cultural, philanthropic, academic and social affairs: Benefit for Sloan Kettering Hospital, Dukakis Presidential Rally, Inaugural Festivities for former President Ronald Reagan, Statue of Liberty Weekend Grand Finale, 20/20 ABC Television Program, Garden State Arts Center Intra-State Competition - First Place, Deborah Hospital Benefit, Shriners Installation, Queens College of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies Benefit, O. Elytis Chair of Modern Greek Studies at Rutgers University, Union County College Folk Arts Festival, NJ State Ethnic and Diversity Festival, a banquet honoring Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew upon his first official visit to New Jersey and, most recently, in October 2015, the first-ever Greek Heritage Day at the NJ Devils vs. NY Islanders game which was held at the Prudential Center in Newark.





Greek Music

Music, in all its forms, is the vehicle through which the Greeks express their grief, sorrow, joy, bondage and freedom. The monophonic lamentations, preserved from antiquity, were fused with Oriental influences during the particular conditions of life in the Byzantine and post-Byzantine ages.

Interestingly, there is a great variety of music in relationship to the size of the country, as each region or island group had its own style and influences. The Greeks contributed their styles to the areas they colonized and assimilated influences from other cultures into their own. Musical meters were derived from the poetic meters of the tragedian, Aeschylus, and other ancient poets.

The music is traditionally composed of three elements: percussion, stringed instruments and wind instruments. Percussion instruments used are the *defi* (tambourine) and the *daouli* (a double-headed drum). The stringed instruments used are the *lira* (lyre); the *laouto* (lute); the *santouri* (dulcimer); the *kanonaki* (zither); the violin, and as recently as the early-20th century, the *bouzouki*. Wind instruments consist of a variety of *floyeras* (shepherds' flutes) like the *pipiza* (similar to the oboe); the *karamouza* and the *zournas* (similar in sound to the English horn); the *tzambounas* and *gaidas* (bagpipes); and the *Clarino* (clarinet).

Greek folk songs were anonymously created over the centuries by the inhabitants of the various regions of Greece, each possessing its own unique cultural and linguistic traditions. The Greeks sang to narrate as well as entertain; to serenade their loved ones; to lull and soothe infants; and to accompany their dances.

Linked with history, customs, traditions and legends, the songs gained the most significance after the fall of Constantinople (present day Istanbul) to the Ottoman Turks in 1453. Demotic songs developed during the next four centuries prodded the Greeks to patriotism and the pursuit of freedom from the Ottoman yoke. These patriotic songs were passed secretly by word-of-mouth, inspiring hope and freedom. This led to the formation of the *Klephts* (brigands who fought the Turks guerilla style).

The mainland songs are robust and untamed in spirit; the island songs are sophisticated, clever, and romantic. Despite regional differences and variations in songs, a unity exists within the songs which make them identifiable and acceptable to all Greek people as their national music.

Greek Dance

Greece has over 525 recognized dances! Each dance is influenced by the history, daily life, traditions, music and land of each region. Some dances are “smooth,” like the water that surrounds Greece and its islands, while other dances are “bouncy” to signify the rocky, mountainous areas. Some of the dances performed tonight are well-loved throughout all of Greece, while others are hidden gems known only to the region from which they originate.

*Please note that, traditionally, many of these dances would be performed in closed circles or in pairs at any number of life events such as weddings, baptisms, festivals, parties, etc. Only the line-leader would improvise a “trick step” (figoura) while the rest of the line continues the basic, or the pairs would improvise their own combination of steps, based on the basic step.

For performance purposes, these dances will be danced in open circles or lines, with choreography that reflects the well-documented “figoures” connected to the specific dance and its region of origin.





Tonight's Program Dances

Part 1

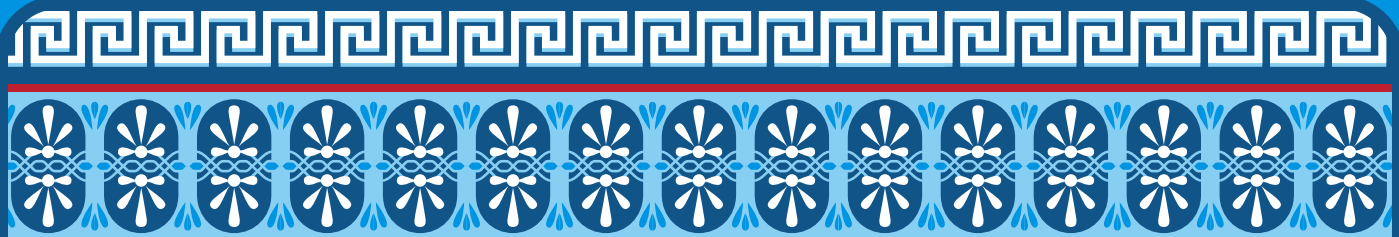
Cretan Syrto (Crete): Considered the heartbeat of the Cretan people, the Syrto is danced throughout the island, with each province adapting its own style and genre of music. The dance consists of 11 steps, and is performed at almost any occasion, since the music and lyrics can be adapted to conform to any human emotion. Women do not jump, or execute leaps during the dance like the men do, but rather, perform modest steps which highlight the beauty of the dance.

Hasaposervikos (Asia Minor/Pan-Hellenic): One of the most popular forms of dance expression to be found throughout the whole of the Near East, it is known by various names such as *Debka* (Arabic); *Soorch Bar* (Armenian); *Arkhon* (Ukrainian); and *Hora* (Romanian). This dance has numerous variations, and was popular throughout Asia Minor beginning in the Hellenistic Age, when it was introduced by the Macedonian warriors of Alexander the Great. Since the troupe's inception, *Hasaposervikos* is one of the Hellenic Dancers' most beloved signature dances.

Antikristos (Western Thrace): Meaning "face-to-face," this free-style couples dance is performed as the bride and groom are escorted to and from the church on their wedding day. The bridal party also dances as they display and exchange gifts, such as handkerchiefs and headscarves, with the bride and groom.

Zembekiko (Asia Minor/Pan-Hellenic): Originally Zembekiko was only danced by pairs of men holding swords or knives. However, this improvisational dance is now danced by men and women in pairs or individually. Because the dancers move about and turn with their arms outstretched resembling the wings of a bird, it is also referred to as "the dance of the eagle."

Sourmeli Vai (Meli, Asia Minor): This "antikristo" or face-to-face dance, is danced by women using small steps. The dancers "clink" objects, such as spoons, small glasses and finger cymbals, which make melodic sounds. Those that are not dancing traditionally will play the "krotala," a type of clapping instrument made of walnut shells worn on the fingers.



Gaida (Florina, Macedonia): This dance takes its name from the Balkan bagpipe that was once popular in northern Greece but has been replaced by the clarinet in most areas. It really refers to a tune, since some villages have completely different steps for the same song. The common *Gaida* dance, however, is known in most of Macedonia, and is serious and proud.

Koulouriotikos (Megara/Salamina): This dance is an enchanting combination of *Syrtaki*, *Hasaposervikos*, and *Hassapikos* (Zorba's Dance), and is believed to have originated either in Salamina, a small island near the port of Pireaus, the village of Koulouri, Megara, or possibly even in the city of Elefsina. Scholars believe *Koulouriotikos* was originally a women's dance, as only men were allowed to dance *Hassapikos*.

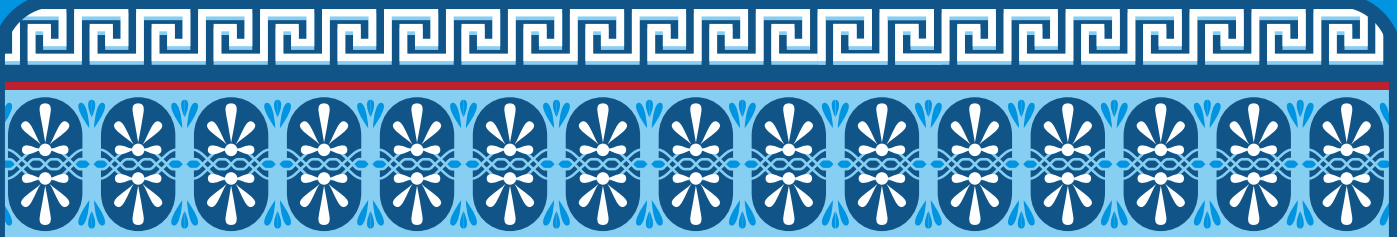
Fashion Show: A brief cultural presentation will be given about the different regional outfits that the dancers are wearing during tonight's program.

Part 2

Naxos Sousta (Naxos, Dodekanisa Islands): a lively dance whose steps mimic the calm sea, and the crashing waves that surround the island.

Sousta Symi (Simi, Dodekanisa Islands): During this playful and flirtatious dance, a male dancer shows off his skill to the women dancing in hopes that he has impressed one of them. After exhibiting his skill, he calls out, "Where are you?" to the women. The woman most impressed by his dancing responds, "Here I am!" and they dance together. The woman teases the man by constantly avoiding him until the last possible second when the two embrace.

Tsamikos (Epiros/Pan-Hellenic): This dance is rooted in the Revolution of 1821, which freed Greece from the tyrannical rule of the Ottoman Empire. This dance is usually performed solely by men, and is extremely proud, robust and acrobatic. Each step is symbolic, as every leap or lift in the air is a declaration of resurrection and victory, and every smack of the foot is another blow to the enemy. This dance assisted in inspiring the modern Greek nation to freedom. For this reason, it is one of the few dances done throughout the whole of Greece, and remains an endearing favorite to this day.



Hiotikos Ballos (Hios, Northern Aegean Islands): Italians occupying the Greek Islands named the *Ballos* after a similar dance of their own, but its name may originally have come from the ancient Greek verb, *ballizo*, meaning “to dance alone.” This *ballos* is distinctly stylistic to the island of Hios, with its sharp hesitation between each step and its smooth rhythm, symbolizing the movement of the sea. While improvisational in nature, this dance is often performed in pairs.

Kotsari (Pontos, Asia Minor): A dance from the City of Kars in the eastern part of Pontos, *Kotsari* means ankle bone in the Pontian dialect, and refers to the lifting of the ankle in several steps. It was originally danced in a closed circle, but today is usually danced in an open circle or, for performance purposes, in a straight line and in-place. *Kotsari* has spread to non-Pontians in Eastern Macedonia, where many Pontian refugees settled after the exchange of populations in the 1920s.

Tsifteteli (Smyrna/Pan-Hellenic): This improvisational “belly-dance” could be found in the Greek communities throughout Asia Minor, but was made popular in the Rembetika taverns in the coastal city of Smyrna. The music tells the stories and shares the emotions of the people of the city. It is most often seen as a flirtatious couples dance, but can be danced individually. Today it is popular throughout Greece.

Pyrgousikos (Hios, Northern Aegean Islands): From the village of Pyrgi, this was originally danced by three dancers: a woman and a man on either side. According to tradition, this dance symbolizes the “kidnapping” of the bride by the groom and his friend, in the early morning hours of the wedding day. The rhythm of the dance is upbeat, and there is constant movement to the front and back, as well as sideways as the small party “steals away from the village.” The dance later evolved to incorporate the guests as they danced to the bride or groom’s house, and to the church before the wedding. Today it is danced in an open circle incorporating more than three people, with more than one line.

Maleviziotikos (Crete): Named for its place of origin, Maleviziin the prefecture of Heraklion (Kastro). The dance is also called *Kastrinos Pidihtos*. This fast-paced dance is completed in 16 steps; the accompanying music is played with violin or lyre, lute and mandolin. This dynamic dance increases in passion and enthusiasm, and at its climax allows the leader of the line to improvise. It is believed that in ancient times it was a flirtatious dance as it allows women to display their gracefulness, and for the men to showcase their acrobatic skills.

Kalamatiano/Mainland Syrtos (Pan-Hellenic): Several ancient sources describe the *Syrtos*, and an inscription at Delphi from the 1st Century A.D. uses that name. The *Kalamatiano* was the popular *Syrto* in southern Greece at the time of the Turkish occupation. Since the south was liberated first, it became the national dance. It is probably named after the song *Mantili Kalamatiano (Kalamata Handkerchief)*. In the time of the Byzantine Empire, the city of Kalamata was famous for its silk, and the song tells of giving a lover a handkerchief of Kalamata silk, which was a gesture of great affection.

Hasaposerviko: This Pan-Hellenic dance with roots in Asia Minor is one of the most popular dance forms in the Balkan and Middle Eastern regions, and is said to be the victory dance of Alexander the Great.





Greek Folk Arts & Culture

Literary Resources

Cultures of the World: Greece, Jill Dubois

Greece & Turkey: Cultures and Costumes,
Paula Hammond & Robert Lee Humphrey

Greek Folk Costume, Ageliki Hatzimichali

Sailing the Wine Dark Sea: Why the Greeks Matter, Thomas Cahill

Greek Folk Dancing, Vicki Corona

Dancing Girl: Themes and Improvisations in a Greek Village Setting,
Thordis Simonsen

Folk Dances of the Greeks, T. Petrides

Songs of the Greek Underworld: The Rebetika Tradition,
Elias Petropulos

Online Resources

www.culture.gr

www.ancientgreece.com

www.goarch.org

www.grecian.net

www.greekfolkmusicanddance.com

www.ohfs.org

www.greekcuisine.com

www.ellada.com

www.ahepa.org

www.helleniccomserve.com



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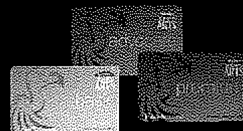


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Discover Jersey Arts is a cosponsored project of the ArtPride New Jersey Foundation and New Jersey State Council on the Arts, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts. Photography (top to bottom): New Jersey Ballet, photo by VAM Productions; "One Day More" The Company of the New 25th Anniversary of Les Misérables at Paper Mill Playhouse, photo by Deen van Meer; "Picturing America" gallery at the Newark Museum; Symphony in C, photo by Kevin Monko.

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